



**Synthesis Report**  
International Workshop  
“Development in a Drugs Environment: Beyond Alternative  
Development?”  
29<sup>th</sup> May – 1<sup>st</sup> June, 2006  
in Berlin

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**1. Background of the workshop**

Poverty, crises and conflicts, and a lack of alternative ways to secure their livelihoods often force rural families to illicitly cultivate drug plants. Many cultivation areas are remote, and have inadequate social and economic infrastructure. The concept of Alternative Development (AD) pursues a multisectoral approach to rural development and drug control in drug producing areas, particularly where coca and opium poppy are grown. It merges the complex and politically sensitive problem of illicit drugs with sustainable rural development and seeks to address the underlying development problems that are the cause of illicit drug crop cultivation.

Among international actors in the fields of Alternative Development (AD) and development-oriented drug control there is a growing consensus that Alternative Development as currently understood and implemented by some donors and beneficiaries has limitations and must be adapted to new requirements, challenges and contexts. Many development actors recognise the threat that drug economies pose to the long-term stability of producer countries. Recent conceptual discussions have shifted towards the adoption of a broad-based approach to Alternative Development; this has included integrating drug analysis and control objectives into the development work of multilateral, national and non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

International institutions and organisations such as the European Commission (EC), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the World Bank have stepped up their commitment to development in drug producing countries during recent years, particularly in Afghanistan and selected Andean countries. This has resulted in more development organisations working in drug environments with a pronounced development-oriented approach.

The European Commission is strongly in favour of strengthening the development foundation of drug control – i.e. of including drug-related issues in international development agendas. It has therefore decided to fund a two-year project for “*Development in a Drugs Environment: Mainstreaming – a Strategic Approach to Alternative Development*”. The project is co-



sponsored and implemented by FAO and GTZ, two development organisations that have been involved for some considerable time in development-oriented drug control. A principal activity of the project thus far has been to organise the international workshop “*Development in a Drugs Environment: Beyond Alternative Development?*”, which took place in Berlin from 29 May to 1 June 2006. The main outcomes of this workshop are presented below.

## 2. Objectives

The workshop aimed to encourage further development and a broadening of the concept of Alternative Development within present and future initiatives in support of the sector. It aimed to explore how to introduce effective mainstreaming of counter narcotics objectives into the design and implementation of development measures, how to develop best practices and to promote mainstreaming and improved networking between the various stakeholders.

## 3. Participants/target group

The majority of the 50 participants of the workshop in Berlin were experts with extensive experience in both Alternative Development and rural development. Participants came from key international organisations such as the European Commission, World Bank, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), CICAD/OAS and Andean Community (CAN); development agencies such as BMZ, FAO and GTZ; governmental counter narcotics and development institutions such as MRRD Afghanistan, DEVIDA Peru, Acción Social Colombia; and NGOs such as TNI, Care, AKF and Programa Desarrollo y Paz del Magdalena Medio. The audience included a number of independent researchers and consultants for drug-related matters.

## 4. Agenda

The workshop started with a review on how the concept and practices of ‘*Alternative Development*’ (AD) have changed with time. Exploring this experience in depth, case studies were presented from several countries in Asia (Afghanistan, Burma/Myanmar, Laos and Thailand) and Latin America (Bolivia, Colombia and Peru). Lessons learned were shared. This provided the basis for debate on the limitations and constraints of AD and also the many opportunities that have arisen in practice.

On the second day future trends, developments and cross-cutting issues were discussed. Many development issues relevant to AD remain on the agenda such as donor alignment, capacity building, rural economic development, conflict and good governance. The sometimes heated debate notwithstanding, links of this kind do represent cross-cutting issues for the different AD models that may apply.

On the third day the workshop began exploring how to *mainstream* cross-cutting issues in development, and examined the specific relevance of mainstreaming for the drugs issue. Attention centred on definitions and recommendations, and the current understanding of



mainstreaming within areas such as eradication, control and/or reduced crop production. Other sectors that impact upon social development in rural communities were also considered, such as levels of HIV/AIDS infection, gender, etc. This led to the development of ideas for mainstreaming that apply to the different socio-geographic levels (e.g. global, national, sub-national/local and sectoral). These ideas were subsequently adapted to match the requirements of the participants and their working environment; i.e. the different institutional backgrounds in which people operate.

The workshop ended with debate on the proposed 2007 workshop, and on how to proceed with the concept and process of *mainstreaming* within the activities of the project in the interim period.

## 5. Discussion

The workshop benefited from the many lively working groups that formed, and from the participatory methods used to encourage and promote discussion. The outcomes of the discussions are summarized below in terms of four key aspects.

### 5.1 Lessons learned

'Alternative Development' has an extensive track record of experience from Central and SE Asia and the Andean region. Lessons have been learned and provide the basis for a number of "Do's" and "Don't's" for Alternative Development in practice:

- Framework and political conditions. Policies need to be in place that are consistent with the law enforcement, political, security and governance structures. Where such structures are not conducive, preconditions may first need to be established. A holistic conceptual framework has proven successful, based on local experience and a firm understanding of those interventions that best suit local conditions.
- Participation. The participation of all stakeholders is essential – but with some understanding of what may be feasible in accordance with local traditions and/or conditions. It may be, for example, that a measure of shared decision-making will be required, or that central or regional government is able to provide the structures that ensure the participation of the beneficiary population in the region or district. This is an essential prerequisite for developing ownership and empowerment of the people involved. Ownership brings order and stability to the community, and a conducive environment for development.
- Integrated rural development (IRD). IRD and AD are not mutually exclusive. The special conditions that link the drug economy with AD have to be considered – such as security (e.g. of food, people and assets), lack of trust in government and outsiders, and the major effort needed to build trust among local people. The main producer crop, for example, will clearly provide many socio-economic benefits despite the illegalities that apply. An appropriate strategy should understand the importance and intricate role of drug crop



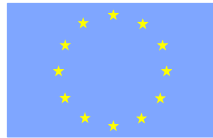
production in, and the benefits it provides for the respective local economy – and apply this understanding in the work and effort required over sometimes long periods that lead to gradual and acceptable change.

- Law enforcement. Here complex issues arise of working within laws that can be applied openly, fairly and in a way understood by all concerned. This involves eradication, but also interdiction and prosecution, which are important elements of drug control. Eradication is critical yet can be counterproductive in terms of long-term reduction of illicit crop production, especially when licit alternatives are not available. Suitable sequencing and timing of AD, interdiction and eradication is fundamental to a sustainable shift from illicit to licit production in drug producer communities. In all cases, these issues should be evaluated prior to commencing any eradication action.

## **5.2 Limiting factors**

Experience and lessons learned have shown that AD has real potential to contribute to the reduction of illicit crop production. However, there are a number of limiting factors including:

- Time horizon. Short-term drug control objectives may conflict with long-term development objectives and horizons. It is necessary to take the time pressure from immediate drug control objectives. Time is an important factor when building trust among the beneficiary population. It determines in the way in which they may be approached and encouraged to shift to alternative crops/incomes.
- Question of scale. Development investments in opium poppy and coca growing areas and the economies of source countries need to be boosted and interventions scaled up and extended into new sectors in order to achieve sustainable results. There is a low level of coverage of AD programmes in these areas in comparison to the size of population involved in cultivation and also in comparison to broader development efforts in the source countries. A regional dimension may sometimes be advantageous so as to deal better with balloon effects.
- Law enforcement. It is easy to focus upon the small-scale crop producer – he/she is highly visible. A focus upon traffickers, traders and processors is more difficult. There is a risk that law enforcers go for an easy target, and miss the main protagonists.
- Conditionality. Conditionality in aid delivery involves a number of issues and risks on the part of the developer/donor/government. There is neither certainty that development will take place (no matter the effort made) nor that drug-related issues will be solved (or even handled well).
- Governance. Failure or lack of governance (e.g. laws, structures, funds, advisors, etc.) or the absence of the state in producer areas are limiting factors. Where governance structures are weak they will need to be supported. Where appropriate governance structures do not exist, they will need to be created and then supported. Government



structures must be capable of coordinating any/all development interventions in illicit drug producing areas.

- Capacity building. Developers, planners and others who attempt to control the production and/or use of drugs should have some understanding of the many issues involved, both related to development and to drug control. They should be knowledgeable about contexts and understand how perspectives will make different people see these many issues differently.
- Approach. An AD approach may be difficult to sell/offer/introduce because of perceived issues of complexity and limited success achieved by earlier efforts. Many different pressures and demands may apply. These can be strong and/or conditioning influences.

### **5.3 Future challenges**

In view of the many limitations that currently apply, changes and adaptations to approaches are needed. How should AD be shaped and applied in future; what requirements may arise?

Commitment and leadership by key institutions will be needed. Institutions of this kind, such as the World Bank, provide global-vision and a broad developmental agenda. Their support is crucial when moving beyond project level investment to (multi-)sectoral, programme-based or regional approaches. To go further, it is necessary to explore previous achievements and results: to learn and to understand from pilot projects and best practices (for example, what works, what does not work, how to make choices, etc.). Donors and development institutions need to work within operational and management structures that are able to conceptualise, coordinate and implement development interventions in drug producing areas within local practices. Equally, donors and other external supporters should encourage progress and develop enough trust in the national coordinating mechanisms that are established. Here a key issue is that ownership of mainstreaming processes becomes established within both government agencies and local communities in the host country. Mainstreaming is a critical determinant of success over the long term, although it may sometimes be difficult to understand and implement and is always costly.

Costs and cost-effectiveness raise issues of funding. How to provide sufficient funds, for example, for the interventions required in the field? Measures that foster economic investment for rural communities should be private-sector driven, market-oriented and lean towards diversity of production on-farm and off-farm, so that people are able to seek employment and generate income from a host of sources. Implicit herein is a shift towards socio-agro-development with all the essential structures, funds, resources, information, etc. required to provide a conducive investment framework. These are challenges for all impoverished rural communities.

### **5.4 Mainstreaming**

Issues of 'mainstreaming' and 'applicability' generated controversy at the workshop. These terms are not always appropriate to the wider issues of people development. The objective of



mainstreaming with regard to counter narcotics may become more understandable if described as integrating an understanding of the causes of illicit drug crop cultivation and CN objectives into the design and implementation of development efforts, programmes, and institution building in opium poppy and coca growing countries (see also 7.2).

### Experience with mainstreaming HIV/AIDS

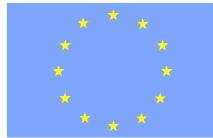
HIV/AIDS infection in communities represents a serious constraint to development – in general and specifically as a threat to society as a whole in affected countries. Many of these constraints can be seen in Africa which has the dubious distinction of hosting >60% of global infection (but <20% of the people). There are similarities in the way in which developers can combat HIV/AIDS infection and drug crop cultivation. HIV/AIDS mainstreaming processes have been underway since the mid-1990s. It was quickly perceived that dealing with HIV/AIDS infection issues in terms of prevention and treatment (i.e. considering it an issue only for those infected) was short sighted. The HIV/AIDS pandemic affects complete countries – it constrains national economic development, access to qualified people, to investment resources and, in general, the whole fabric of society. The underlying determinants of HIV vulnerability are poverty, gender inequality, poor access to social services and instability. These are issues that need to be addressed; it is not sufficient to provide treatment for infected/affected people. In order to reduce or overcome the causes and consequences of HIV/AIDS in a country, it becomes necessary to devise a national strategy that may take into consideration all people, all levels of action and all those national sectors that impact upon, and are affected by, the results of HIV/AIDS infection.

### Mainstreaming counter narcotics

To help understand mainstreaming activities, develop effective strategies, mobilise the people and funds required and, ultimately, to implement mainstreaming processes takes time. During the workshop only some preliminary recommendations for mainstreaming Alternative Development and counter narcotics strategies were explored and outlined. Mainstreaming is a process that can be (and should be) applied to different levels of development/investment – international, national and in-country. Where possible, developers should also take a sectoral and/or community approach whenever this may assist implementation.

Within the country, drug issues in the context of AD should be included in all relevant national development plans and frameworks. At regional and global level, the relevant international agencies need to improve coordination among themselves and to define and pursue common goals. This delivers synergy, cost-effective use of resources and a greater exchange of information.

The process of mainstreaming should be development-oriented and firmly address the needs of the target population. Mainstreaming should take place where it has relevance. A political commitment and strong leadership on the part of the national government is helpful. The creation of a lead agency responsible for coordinating and implementing mainstreaming could be of value for all sectors. Ideally this would be a national body with strong support from the central government. It follows that capacity building will be essential to encourage a shift of



mainstreaming processes to centre stage within the development choices available, Without capacity building, the technical limitations of the implementing bodies will remain a liability and their understanding and ability to promote an understanding of the causes of illicit drug crop cultivation and appropriate sectoral responses will remain weak. Whatever the socio-techno-economic processes involved, trained and informed people are essential. It follows that developing best practice examples and monitoring the processes of development involved will be crucially important for sustainable mainstreaming in the long term.

## 6. Evaluation and assessment of the workshop

Constraints experienced with current approaches to Alternative Development have become increasingly clear. Efforts to implement AD are frequently hindered or offset by an *ad hoc* approach that can be short-term, lacking in strategic vision and inconsistent. Isolated interventions and local approaches as well as inconsistent strategic policies hinder or even often offset the impact of AD efforts.

There is not so much a lack of understanding of the context, but rather a lack of imagination to seek new ways or opportunities for overcoming the many constraints that impede the aspirations of people and their communities. Broadening the agenda and introducing a mainstreaming approach can provide new opportunities. Delegates confirmed the length of time that may be required and the differences that persist between regions, countries and communities when attempting to link *mainstreaming* into the context of *AD* and the many developmental opportunities that can arise.

Mainstreaming counter narcotics does not mean including it in *all* development programmes and sectors of any given organisation and/or of the target country. In essence, it means integrating the causes of opium poppy and coca cultivation and counter narcotic issues into development programmes of all *relevant* sectors in those countries that continue with the production of illicit crops.

Mainstreaming counter narcotics requires time and a concerted effort to explore the experience gained and the lessons learned. This represents more than the investment of a single workshop and the efforts of 50 delegates, and links into the wider audience represented by the networks into which these delegates may have access; this is a continuous institutional process that seeks to build capacity in people at the sharp end of the development process and those who advise them. The workshop simply represented a first step in the process of understanding.

One important and integral result of the workshop has been the period of reflection on AD in general, on lessons learned, on limitations/constraints, and on opportunities and perspectives for the future. This has provided an atmosphere of hesitant optimism, linked to the pragmatism of where to go from here. Messages of this kind provide a basis from which to proceed with the promotion of mainstreaming in rural development.



In reality, mainstreaming is an awareness building process; ideas, concepts and methods have to be shared, dispersed and spread beyond the narrow community of those specialising in drugs and development. They have to reach into, and integrate with, new groups and especially those involved with policy-making and development planning in the host countries.

As a logical next step for promoting mainstreaming, an expert meeting is planned for 2007 as a follow-up to the 2006 workshop. The meeting will include AD experts, but it will also widen participation and reach out to people representing political management and decision-making at national level.

## **7. Terminology and definitions**

An important and additional insight has been the heterogeneous understanding of concepts and the need to apply better-defined terminology. Terms have proven to be inadequate for the complexity of the many issues involved, and discussions were sometimes clouded by different understandings. The workshop found the following definitions and terms to be more appropriate:

### ***7.1 Alternative Development (AD) – Rural Development in a Drugs Environment (RDE)***

The broad definition of AD as declared at UNGASS in 1998 provides a rather general understanding of the term. Depending on the organisations and people involved, this understanding tends to be either more development-oriented or is aimed mainly at the reduction of illicit drugs production. The understanding of AD at the workshop was mainly one of taking a broad approach that seeks to address the underlying developmental problems that may give rise to illicit drug crop cultivation.

Because of issues of misconception, mismanagement and/or misunderstanding over time, the term AD has come under increasing criticism from many sectors.

It is not just the concept and understanding of the term and its application that needs to be revised. The introduction and use of a new terminology would be of value. Delegates at the workshop suggested that '*Rural Development in a Drug Environment (RDE)*' would provide a more reasonable and accurate term that would encapsulate approach, context and issue.

### ***7.2 Mainstreaming/Integration of counter narcotics***

Mainstreaming is simply embedding the objective of illicit drug crop elimination in national and regional development programmes. By doing so it is anticipated that not only will it be possible to maximise both the development and counter narcotics impact of these programmes but also it will be possible to bring greater resources to bear. Furthermore, the burden of responsibility for opium poppy and coca elimination does not fall on one ministry, donor or



international agency which, given the interdisciplinary nature of the drugs issue, will undoubtedly be overextending its policy and programmatic capacities. Instead, it allows both policy and implementing organisations to pursue areas of work in which they have comparative advantage but to do so in coordination with other institutions similarly implementing efforts in sectors where they have specialised skills. The potential for economies of scale are obvious. So, too, are the advantages of extending service delivery through the appropriate line departments rather than creating geographical enclaves under the jurisdiction of one line ministry with all the inconsistency of policy and programme that such an approach can entail.

In practice, mainstreaming counter narcotics involves looking at development programmes through a counter narcotics prism:

- Developing policies and programmes that are informed by the potential impacts on illicit drug crop cultivation;
- Adjusting the focus of development programmes and projects so that they recognise and understand the potential impact they might have on illicit drug crop cultivation, and take steps to maximise positive impacts when conducting their activities;
- Promoting coordination and encouraging programmes to be complementary in their interventions, at national, province and district level;
- Ensuring programmes or projects do not inadvertently encourage illicit drug crop cultivation.

Published by:

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